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RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 2520
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 2643
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1136
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001146

SIPDIS

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DRL FOR N. WILETT
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: MDC CONSIDERING JOINING GOVERNMENT

REF: A) HARARE 1145 B) HARARE 1034 C) HARARE 1139

Classified By: CDA Katherine Dhanani for reason 1.4 (d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Despite indications it considered the September 15 power-sharing deal dead (Ref B), the MDC appears to be reevaluating its position with an eye toward joining ZANU-PF in a government of national unity. The MDC will meet in South Africa January 5-7 to discuss next steps, including a possible return to negotiations (Ref C). According to confidantes of MDC president Morgan Tsvangirai, MDC leadership has become convinced it cannot effectively address Zimbabwe's problems from outside of government. While it does not believe it can govern collaboratively with Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe, it believes its participation in government can begin the process of political and economic stabilization and prepare the way for new elections in which it can win the presidency. The MDC also believes that as part of the government, and with control of the House of Assembly, it can foment the disintegration of ZANU-PF. To achieve a final deal, the MDC believes it can work out compromises on the outstanding issues of division of governorships, appointments of ambassadors and permanent secretaries, and composition and functions of the national security council. It is willing to agree, as suggested by SADC, that it share the Home Affairs ministry with ZANU-PF. Key to an agreement will be a satisfactory division of other ministries. END SUMMARY

¶2. (C) MDC lawyer and Tsvangirai confidante Innocent Chagonda told polecon chief December 29 that he and others, including MDC secretary general Tendai Biti (Ref B), had until recently opposed the entry of the MDC into a power-sharing agreement with ZANU-PF. They believed the MDC under an agreement could not achieve sufficient power, and they loathed the prospect of attempting to work with Zimbabwean president Mugabe and others they considered reprehensible. Their expectation was that ZANU-PF could not continue to govern on its own, and that the government would collapse. Chagonda said he was now convinced that Mugabe would find ways to maintain power and, with disregard for his countrymen, would govern until he was "the last man alive in Harare."

¶3. (C) Therefore, Chagonda continued, his position, as well as that of Biti and other hard-liners, had evolved. While under no illusions about being able to govern collaboratively with ZANU-PF, they believed their entry into government would achieve several salutary objectives: the abductions and

prosecutions of MDC members would cease; the MDC would be able to end the politicization of food assistance, and would be able to channel humanitarian assistance to the needy; and the MDC could focus on the drafting of a new constitution and preparation for new elections.

14. (C) Chagonda said the MDC had no immediate expectation that a new government that included ZANU-PF would undertake the necessary political and economic reforms that would result in U.S. and other western assistance. Rather, the goals were to address Zimbabwe's critical humanitarian needs and set the stage for new elections that could lead to a real democratic transition.

15. (C) With regard to the so-called outstanding issues left to negotiate between the MDC and ZANU-PF, Chagonda first noted that MDC negotiators were pleased with the draft of Amendment 19 that has been gazetted (officially published for

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public comment) and will be before Parliament in mid-January.

He thought agreement could be achieved between the parties on division of governorships, appointment of ambassadors, and composition and functions of the national security council. The MDC was willing to take its cue from SADC and share leadership of the Home Affairs ministry. The most problematic issue, according to Chagonda, would be an equitable distribution of the remaining ministries.

16. (C) Tsvangirai advisor Jameson Timba, in a separate meeting, concurred with Chagonda that the best option for the MDC was a finalized power-sharing agreement. He added that MDC participation in government, coupled with its majority in Parliament, would allow it to establish contacts and alliances with anti-Mugabe ZANU-PF members to weaken Mugabe and his party.

17. (C) Both Timba and Chagonda expected Tsvangirai to return to Zimbabwe in mid-January. Receipt of his passport had removed one obstacle. There was concern, however, that as leader of the MDC, Tsvangirai could be prosecuted, along with lower-level MDC officials (Ref A), for the alleged establishment of paramilitary training camps in Botswana. Timba expected the MDC strategy conference in South Africa (Ref C) to deal with the timing of Tsvangirai's return.

COMMENT

18. (C) During the last several months, the MDC has blown hot and cold on an agreement and we can't be certain, despite the comments of Chagonda and Timba, that the MDC will now push for a finalized agreement. We may have a better idea after the South African strategy conference January 5-7. We also note that hard-line elements in ZANU-PF remain opposed to an agreement and it is not clear ZANU-PF will make compromises the MDC believes are necessary.

DHANANI